



Annual Report 2026

Céline Assaf-Boustani leads the Human Rights Foundation's work to defend dissidents, free political prisoners, and equip people living under dictatorship.



Dictators fear one thing above all: the light.

This year, our Tyranny Tracker confirmed what dissidents already know: three out of four people on Earth live under authoritarian rule. We launched the Tracker in February in New York, classifying 179 countries and territories. In August, the Kremlin answered, branding HRF an “undesirable organization” and citing the Tracker by name. When a regime works this hard to keep people in the dark, it tells you that truth still frightens it. So we kept shining it.

On July 4, Pastor Ezra Jin walked out of a Chinese detention center after nearly nine months, following our petition to the United Nations and a campaign that reached more than 650 congressional staffers. Two weeks later, Cuban artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara left prison for forced exile after five years. That same month, UN experts ruled for three more of our clients, from Rwanda to Hong Kong.

At the Oslo Freedom Forum, nearly 1,600 people from 111 countries gathered under one idea: dismantling dictatorship. María Corina Machado joined us in person for the first time. When Xi Jinping came to Washington, we projected the faces of eight prisoners of his regime across the capital, so he would see them too.

We also put new tools in the hands of the brave. Dissidents led teams of developers at three AI Hack for Freedom events, building their own software. Our partners carried a thousand flash drives of outside information into North Korea. And we launched the Resilience Program to care for the frontline defenders who carry the weight of this work.

Every cell has a crack, and every regime a weakness. Our job is to find it, widen it, and stand with those letting the light in.

Thank you for standing with us. We will prevail.

Céline Assaf-Boustani
PRESIDENT, HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

3 in 4

people on Earth live under
authoritarian rule. Source: HRF
Tyranny Tracker

“

I believe the dictatorship has to end, and the Castro dynasty has to end, as well. Because as long as there is a Castro in power, there will be corruption.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara

Released into forced exile on July 18, 2026, after five years in prison. The UN had ruled his detention arbitrary in response to HRF's 2021 petition.

Contents

2026 ANNUAL REPORT

00	Wins & Highlights The year, month by month	5
01	Our Mission Nonpartisan, with a focus on closed societies	8
02	Legal Advocacy & Policy Research UN petitions, rulings, the Tyranny Tracker	10
03	Global Advocacy & Campaigns Art in Protest, Financial Freedom, AI for Individual Rights, CCP Disruption, Korea	16
04	Direct Support Freedom Fellowship, Oslo Scholars, microgrants, resilience	26
05	Public Education & Events Oslo Freedom Forum, Havel Prize, College Freedom Forum	30
06	Media Impact Op-eds, coverage, and moments that broke through	36
07	Financials Where the money goes	39
08	Board & International Council The people who guide HRF	40
09	Staff The team behind the work, and those we lost	41
10	Join the Global Movement Give, attend, volunteer, and act	44

6

UN rulings that our clients were
jailed arbitrarily

179

countries and territories rated by
the Tyranny Tracker at launch

111

countries represented at a
record Oslo Freedom Forum

1,000

flash drives of outside media
carried into North Korea

The year dictators **lost ground**

6

UN rulings for our clients

From India to Hong Kong, UN experts found our clients were jailed arbitrarily and called for their release.

3 in 4

people on Earth under authoritarian rule

The Tyranny Tracker's verdict at launch. Russia answered by banning HRF.

3.3B+

satoshis granted to 64 freedom tech projects

Three Bitcoin Development Fund rounds in 2026; \$12.2 million to 383 projects in 70 countries since the fund began.

January–May

January

- Rocío San Miguel, our 2025 Thulani Maseko Justice Prize laureate, walks out of a Venezuelan prison after 23 months.
- At Bitcoin Park in Austin, the first AI Hack for Freedom puts eight dissidents in charge of developer teams. In 28 hours they build eight tools.

February

- Feb. 26: HRF launches the Tyranny Tracker in New York. Its finding: 75% of humanity lives under authoritarian rule.

March

- UN experts rule for Umar Khalid, HRF’s first win on India, then for Cambodian activist Koet Saray six days later.
- HRF urges the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to affirm that democracy is itself a human right.

April

- The Bitcoin Development Fund grants 1.5 billion sats to 26 projects. HRF’s “Freedom Go Up” stage runs three days at Bitcoin 2026 in Las Vegas.

May

- The UN orders the release of Equatoguinean lawyer Anacleto Micha Ndong Nlang.
- May 19: HRF petitions the UN for three jailed Zion Church pastors: Ezra Jin Mingri, Gao Yingjia, and Wang Lin.

June–September

June

- June 1–3: nearly 1,600 people from 111 countries fill the Oslo Freedom Forum. María Corina Machado joins in person for the first time.

July

- July 4: Pastor Ezra Jin walks free, after HRF’s UN petition and President Trump raised his case with Xi Jinping.
- July 18: Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara leaves prison after five years, forced into exile.
- In three weeks, UN experts rule for Victoire Ingabire, Sopon “Get” Surariddhidhamrong, and Owen Chow.

August

- Aug. 6: Russia bans HRF as “undesirable,” citing the Tyranny Tracker. HRF calls it a badge of honor.
- Twenty frontline defenders gather in Nosara, Costa Rica, for the first retreat of HRF’s new Resilience Program.

September

- Sept. 23: as Xi Jinping lands in Washington, HRF projects the faces of eight political prisoners across the city.
- Sept. 24–25: ten democracy advocates lead developer teams at AI Hack for Freedom III, co-hosted with the National Endowment for Democracy.

UPCOMING

This fall

OCT. 6–9 • NASHVILLE

Global Freedom Tech Summit

DEC. 2–5 • BLANTYRE, MALAWI

Fifth Africa Bitcoin Conference

SEOUL

NK Insider Forum

DEC. 3–4 • SAN FRANCISCO

AI Hack for Freedom IV

NOV. 3–5 • SAN FRANCISCO

AI for Individual Rights Summit



01

Our Mission

Nonpartisan and relentless, HRF stands with the people dictators fear most: those who speak, organize, and build in the world's most closed societies.

■ MISSION STATEMENT

■ FOUR STRATEGIES



OUR MISSION

Freedom is not a regional value. It is a **human** one.

The Human Rights Foundation (HRF) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that promotes and protects human rights globally, with a focus on closed societies.

HRF believes that all human beings are entitled to freedom of self-determination, freedom from tyranny, the right to speak freely, to associate with those of like mind, and to leave and enter their countries. Individuals in a free society must be accorded equal treatment and due process under the law, and must have the opportunity to participate in the governments of their countries. HRF's ideals likewise find expression in the conviction that all human beings have the right to be free from arbitrary detention or exile and from interference and coercion in matters of conscience.

HRF neither supports nor condones violence.

01 Legal Advocacy & Policy Research

We take the cases of prisoners of conscience to the UN, pro bono, and publish research that shows how dictatorships work.

02 Global Advocacy & Campaigns

We run campaigns that use art, technology, and pressure on brands and celebrities to expose tyranny.

03 Public Education & Events

Through the Oslo Freedom Forum, podcasts, and events worldwide, we bring the struggle for freedom into the mainstream.

04 Direct Support

We give activists the resources, skills, contacts, and attention they need to make change at home.



02

Legal Advocacy & Policy Research

Law is our sharpest tool. Our lawyers take the cases of jailed dissidents to the UN, and our researchers name the regimes that jail them.

-
- FREE
 - PETITIONS & FILINGS
 - RESEARCH
 - SIX UN RULINGS
 - THE TYRANNY TRACKER

FREE

They walked out of their cells

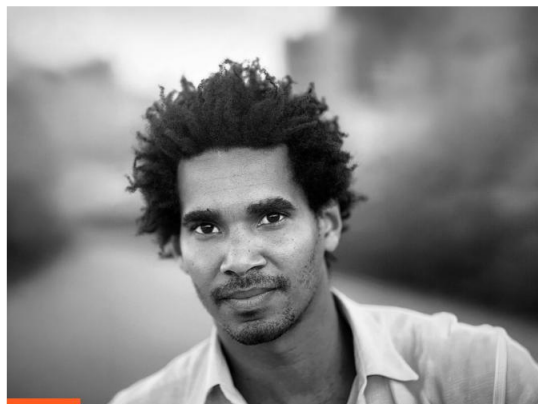


CHINA

Pastor Ezra Jin (Jin Mingri)

The founder of Beijing's Zion Church was seized in October 2025, in China's most coordinated crackdown on an unregistered church in 40 years. In May, HRF petitioned the UN for him and fellow pastors Gao Yingjia and Wang Lin, and sent his daughter Grace Jin Drexel's video appeal to more than 650 congressional staffers. President Trump raised his case with Xi Jinping. On July 4, after nearly nine months in detention, Pastor Jin walked free. At least eight Zion Church leaders are still held, and HRF is pressing on.

Behind every release is a prisoner who refused to break. HRF built the legal record and made sure the world kept saying their names.



CUBA

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara

The leader of the San Isidro Movement and a 2025 laureate of HRF's Václav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent spent five years behind bars. HRF petitioned the UN in 2021, and the Working Group declared his detention arbitrary. On July 18, having served his full sentence, he was put on a plane to the United States. Exile was the regime's price for his freedom.

ALSO FREE

VENEZUELA

Rocío San Miguel

Our 2025 Thulani Maseko Justice Prize laureate left prison in January after 23 months. She remains under precautionary measures.

INDIA

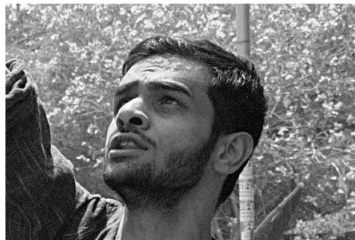
Irfan Mehraj

The Kashmiri journalist, whose case HRF and FORUM-ASIA took to the UN in January, was bailed on July 22 after more than three years. He is confined to Delhi, more than 500 miles from home.

UN RULINGS

Six verdicts against dictatorship

Six times in 2026, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention agreed with HRF: our clients were jailed for exercising their rights, and must go free.



INDIA

Umar Khalid

UN WGAD OPINION · MARCH 17

Held in Delhi's Tihar jail for more than five years without trial. The UN faulted India's "vague and overbroad" anti-terrorism law. HRF's first win on India.



CAMBODIA

Koet Saray

UN WGAD OPINION · MARCH 23

Former president of the Khmer Student Intellectual League Association, arrested in April 2024 after posting photos on social media. Rep. Lori Trahan now champions his case in Congress.



EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Anacleto Micha Ndong Nlang

UN WGAD OPINION · MAY

A lawyer and activist seized at home in Malabo without a warrant in January 2024. The UN called for his immediate release. In June, HRF and partners demanded Obiang comply.



RWANDA

Victoire Ingabire

UN WGAD OPINION · JULY 6

Rwanda's leading opposition figure, arrested at her Kigali home in June 2025. HRF filed with Freedom Now and the Lantos Foundation; the UN demanded her release.



THAILAND

Sapon "Get" Surariddhidhamrong

UN WGAD OPINION · JULY 21

A student pro-democracy activist jailed under Thailand's lèse-majesté law, one of the world's strictest. Filed with Thai Lawyers for Human Rights.



HONG KONG

Owen Chow

UN WGAD OPINION · JULY 27

A nursing student and one of the Hong Kong 47, jailed for joining the 2020 pro-democracy primaries. The UN called for his immediate release and compensation.

PETITIONS & FILINGS

Every case, on the record

Our lawyers work pro bono, turning each prisoner's story into a case the UN must answer.

New petitions to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention

Umar Khalid · India · Jan. 5

Filed the day India's Supreme Court denied him bail. The UN ruled for him in March.

Hossein Shanbehzadeh · Iran · Jan. 13

An online activist, arrested and beaten after replying to Ali Khamenei with a single period.

Vadim Kobzev & Alexei Liptser · Russia · Jan. 17

Alexei Navalny's lawyers, filed on the first anniversary of their sentencing.

Irfan Mehraj · India · Jan. 30

Kashmiri journalist, with FORUM-ASIA.

Gao Zhen · China · April 1

Dissident artist, named a 2026 Havel Prize laureate weeks later.

Pastors Jin Mingri, Gao Yingjia & Wang Lin · China · May 19

Zion Church leaders held for their faith.

Dr. Mahrang Baloch · Pakistan · Aug. 5

Baloch rights leader, with Freedom House and Hindus for Human Rights.

Ruth López & Enrique Anaya · El Salvador · August

Anti-corruption lawyers held over a year without trial. Filed with Perseus Strategies.

UN Universal Periodic Review

April

Hungary (with the Artistic Freedom Initiative), Eswatini, and Thailand.

July

Sudan, and Syria (with the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre).

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

March

In the advisory opinion on Democracy and Political Rights, HRF urged the Court to affirm that democracy is itself a human right.

8

new UN petitions, for 12 prisoners

5

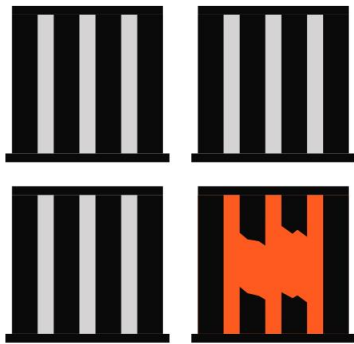
countries reviewed in UPR submissions

\$0

cost to prisoners and their families

THE TYRANNY TRACKER

We mapped tyranny. **The Kremlin** proved us right.



3 in 4

people on Earth live under authoritarian rule

HRF's democracy index rates every government democratic, hybrid authoritarian, or fully authoritarian, so no dictator can hide behind a staged election.

On Feb. 26 in New York, HRF opened the Tyranny Tracker to the public after a decade as an internal research project, with support from The Reynolds Foundation. It classified 179 countries and territories against 45 indicators in three pillars: electoral competition, freedom of dissent, and institutional accountability. The verdict: 75% of the world's population lives under authoritarianism, in just 92 countries.

HRF's researchers took the Tracker to the National Endowment for Democracy, Oxford, the University of Chicago Law School, Stanford, and the Copenhagen Democracy Summit. The Financial Times

cited it in an investigation of how European ESG investors helped fund Putin's war on Ukraine.

The Kremlin noticed. On Aug. 6, Russia designated HRF an "undesirable organization," naming the Tracker and its "fully authoritarian" rating of Russia as the reason. On Sept. 3, Russia's censor, Roskomnadzor, sent a demand to HRF's U.S. web host, WP Engine, which blocked the site inside Russia within 24 hours. HRF refused to impose the block, condemned the company for obeying, and vowed that the Tracker's findings will keep reaching Russian readers.

179

countries and territories classified at launch

45

indicators in three pillars

92

countries under authoritarian rule

THE KREMLIN'S ANSWER

By criminalizing our organization — even threatening with imprisonment those who collaborate with us — for having a research project that documents how Putin's dictatorship is a 'fully authoritarian regime,' the Kremlin does nothing but confirm our assessment. We accept this designation as a badge of honor.

JAVIER EL-HAGE · HRF STATEMENT ON RUSSIA'S DESIGNATION, NEW YORK · AUG. 6, 2026

RESEARCH

Evidence that arms the brave

HRF's researchers document how dictators steal, spy, and launder their image, then hand that evidence to activists and policymakers.

GUIDE
MAY

Bitcoin for Nonprofits

How civil society groups under authoritarian regimes can use bitcoin to receive donations, protect financial privacy, and make payments no regime can stop.

REPORT
JUNE

How the Regime in Equatorial Guinea Exploits Football

With testimony from former players, a report on how the Obiang family captured the national game for prestige, distraction, and profit. In English and Spanish.

UN SUBMISSION
JUNE

Freedom of association

Comments on the UN Human Rights Committee's draft General Comment No. 38 on Article 22 of the ICCPR.

JOINT
STATEMENTS
JULY

Transnational repression in Asia

On Vietnam's transnational repression in Thailand, and an urgent call on Thailand not to send journalist Bai Zhaodong back to China.

POLICY BRIEFS
JULY–AUGUST

Beyond Borders

Two briefs, for the United States and the European Union, and an activist toolkit on China's transnational repression, released ahead of Xi Jinping's visit to Washington. They reached more than 110 policymakers.

REPORT
AUGUST

Manipulation of Sustainable Development

How authoritarian regimes game the UN Sustainable Development Goals to fake progress and tighten control.

REPORT
SEPTEMBER

Warning Signals

An HRF-sponsored investigation by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute into Chinese AI surveillance in Venezuela.

GUIDE
SEPTEMBER

AI for Activists

A field guide for human rights defenders on using open-source AI tools securely.



03

Global Advocacy & Campaigns

Dictators launder their image through fashion, sport, art and technology. We name the brands and stars who help them, and hand the stage to the people they silence.

-
- ART IN PROTEST
 - WEAR YOUR VALUES
 - AI FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS
 - CCP DISRUPTION INITIATIVE
 - COMBATING KLEPTOCRACY
 - CELEBRITIES & DICTATORS
 - FINANCIAL FREEDOM
 - KOREA DESK



Richard Gere at the 2026 Oslo Freedom Forum. Art in Protest arranged his meeting with Oslo's Tibetan community.

PHOTO: OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

ART IN PROTEST

Doors that regimes tried to lock

Artists are among the first people a dictatorship jails. In 2026, HRF put their work in front of the public in Oslo's busiest square.

In the week before the Oslo Freedom Forum, HRF set up **Doors to Freedom** in Rådhusplassen, the square in front of Oslo City Hall. Each door told the story of an artist who had been censored, imprisoned or driven into exile: among them the Chinese artist Gao Zhen, the Cuban performance artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, the Venezuelan cartoonist Rayma Suprani, the North Korean painter Song Byeok, the Syrian artist Azza Abo Rebieh, the Nicaraguan cartoonist Pedro X. Molina and the Kurdish painter Zehra Doğan. Volunteers stopped passersby to tell them who the artists were.

The installation first opened in Miami Beach in December 2025, where the

Miami Herald and NBC Miami covered it. It returns for Art Week Miami this December with Cuban Freedom March.

In June, HRF produced **Let There Be Light**, an exhibition by the Tibetan artist Tenzing Rigdol on Tibetan identity and life under Chinese rule. HRF also hosted two receptions and arranged a private meeting between Richard Gere and members of Oslo's Tibetan community.

One of those doors has since opened. On July 18, after five years in prison, Otero Alcántara was put on a plane into exile. He won HRF's Havel Prize in 2025.

7

persecuted artists on the doors in Oslo

2

art exhibitions in Oslo around the Forum

COMBATING KLEPTOCRACY

Follow the money

Dictators hide their money in the West, and they use it to buy influence there. In June, HRF launched **Dissident's Mic**, an interview series hosted by program lead Casey Michel. His guests were Félix Maradiaga on Nicaragua, Tutu Alicante on Equatorial Guinea and Jewher Ilham on the Uyghur region.

Michel also took the case to the opinion pages. His essay "Russia Has Lost Its 'Near Abroad'" ran in **The Wall Street Journal** on June 12, and he wrote further pieces for **The Moscow Times** and **The Kyiv Independent**. HRF's report **Dictators and Diplomas** traced how money from autocracies reaches American universities.

3

dissidents on Dissident's Mic, from Nicaragua to the Uyghur region

WEAR YOUR VALUES

What is in your clothes

Forced labor hides in global supply chains. In February, Wear Your Values began a year-long partnership with Transparentem to investigate the factories behind Oslo Freedom Forum merchandise. The goal is a published list of products verified free of forced labor. That would make HRF the first conference series able to prove its supply chain is clean.

At OFF 2026, the program brought industry leaders, activists, NGO heads and survivors of forced labor to a private roundtable to plan its next campaign. The main-stage panel was "Ending Modern Slavery in Global Supply Chains." To partner with the program, write to wearyourvalues@hrf.org.

Stars won't **launder** a dictator for free

Regimes pay for famous faces and football shirts. HRF makes that cost them.

In May, as the World Cup approached, Sports & Dictators lead Karim Zidan launched **Power Plays**. The five-part podcast covers the tournament's long history with dictators, from corruption and illicit money to regimes that use football to launder their reputations. It became HRF's most popular podcast, and Apple Podcasts featured it on its homepage.

HRF also wrote directly to the stars. In March, it urged Doja Cat to drop her headline slot at the Move Afrika concert in Kigali, where the Rwandan regime restricts its own artists. In May, it wrote to Will Smith. He had gone to Angola for the announcement of the E1 electric-boat Grand Prix, appeared with President João Lourenço and endorsed the regime's "Visit Angola" campaign. HRF urged him to use his voice for Angola's defenders instead.

Abdullah Ibhais was jailed after he spoke up for workers at Qatar's World Cup. With an HRF microgrant, he now runs **Inside the Machine**, a course that trains journalists to expose sportswashing. On June 8 he told his story in **The Guardian**.

In September, at AI Hack for Freedom III, Carine Kanimba's team won first prize with **Behind the Jersey**. Fans can look up their club and see whether its sponsors are tied to a dictatorship.

5

episodes of **Power Plays**, HRF's most popular podcast

140,000+

listens



Karim Zidan, host of **Power Plays**.

PHOTO: HRF



AI HACK FOR FREEDOM III • WASHINGTON, D.C.

PHOTO: HRF

The activist **sets the mission**

Tibetan-Canadian activist Chemi Lhamo captains her team at AI Hack for Freedom III, co-hosted with the National Endowment for Democracy, Sept. 24–25, 2026. Her team's app, Nima, took third prize.

AI FOR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Dissidents, armed with **their own AI**

In 2026, HRF's AI for Individual Rights program went from launch to full operation. Its fund has made 18 grants in two rounds, in November 2025 and May 2026, to open-source, privacy-protecting tools and to research on how regimes turn AI against their people. With Finite, HRF ran three Agent Camps, where more than ten activists from Afghanistan, Iran, Venezuela, Bolivia and beyond learned to run their own AI agents.

Then the activists started building. At every AI Hack for Freedom, a dissident captains a team of developers. In Austin, Jan. 17–18, eight defenders and their teams built eight tools in 28 hours. In Nashville, May 9–10, eight more came from Rwanda, Nicaragua, Hong Kong, Iran and beyond. In Washington, D.C., Sept. 24–25, the

Autocrats use AI to censor and surveil. HRF puts open-source, private AI in the hands of the people they target.

National Endowment for Democracy and the AI Freedom Lab co-hosted ten captains from Kenya, Rwanda, Tibet, Turkey, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and beyond. Prizes were paid on-site in bitcoin. Carine Kanimba's **Behind the Jersey** won \$20,000, Kadir Yağız Çetin's **Ustad**, an offline school for Afghan girls, won \$10,000, and Chemi Lhamo's **Nima**, which keeps protest footage safe when a phone is seized, won \$6,000. NPR's **Weekend Edition Sunday** covered the event on Sept. 27.

HRF also funded research by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) on the Chinese Communist Party's AI and on Venezuela, and published its **AI for Activists** guide on Sept. 22.

\$50K

prize pool at Hack III, paid in bitcoin

26

activist captains across three hackathons

18

AI Fund grants since November 2025

NOV. 3–5 · SAN FRANCISCO

AI for Individual Rights Summit

Upcoming

DEC. 3–4 · SAN FRANCISCO · PRESIDIO BITCOIN

AI Hack for Freedom IV

Upcoming



Mentoring at AI Hack for Freedom III, Washington, D.C.

PHOTO: HRF

Money no dictator can freeze

Regimes freeze their critics' bank accounts and print away their savings. The Bitcoin Development Fund backs the open-source builders who make that harder.

The fund announced three grant rounds in 2026. In January it granted 1.3 billion sats to 22 projects, and in April 1.5 billion sats to 26 more. Round II followed on Aug. 25, with more than 500 million sats for 16 freedom tech projects. In all, 2026 saw more than 3.3 billion sats go to 64 projects.

The money goes to the tools activists depend on. Grantees include NetBlocks, which tracks internet shutdowns as they happen; Yes Bitcoin Haiti and My First Bitcoin, which teach people to hold their own money; and privacy-first messengers such as Oxchat and Flotilla. WalletScrutiny checks whether wallets are what they claim to be.

Grants build on each other. At the Oslo Freedom Forum in June, the World Liberty Congress launched *Ágora*, a platform for freedom movements to raise money from around the world without banks as gatekeepers. It was first built at an AI Hack for Freedom and then backed by the fund.

Since 2020, the Bitcoin Development Fund has granted \$12.2 million in bitcoin to 383 projects in 70 countries.

3.3B+

sats granted in 2026, to 64 projects

\$12.2M

in bitcoin granted since 2020



Calle, builder of Bitchat and Cashu and a Bitcoin Development Fund grantee, at the 2026 Oslo Freedom Forum.

PHOTO: OSLO FREEDOM FORUM



Farida Nabourema, founder of the Africa Bitcoin Conference.

PHOTO: HRF

FINANCIAL FREEDOM · EDUCATION & GATHERINGS

Teaching movements to **become unstoppable**

A tool only frees people who know how to use it. So HRF teaches, from Oslo to Accra.

In May, HRF published **Bitcoin for Nonprofits**, a guide that shows civil society groups under dictatorship how to take donations in bitcoin, protect their financial privacy and make payments no regime can block. **Bitcoin Magazine** covered it. HRF handed it out at the Freedom Tech Academies at the Oslo Freedom Forum, and it anchors HRF's quarterly Financial Freedom webinar for activists.

In April, HRF ran the "Freedom Go Up" stage for three days at Bitcoin 2026 in Las Vegas. From June 4 to 6, the fifth Lofoten Retreat in northern Norway brought together 60 dissidents, developers and funders to

take on surveillance, financial repression and AI. In July, at the Africa Liberty Forum in Accra, HRF's Femi Longe led a workshop on financial censorship and central bank digital currencies across Africa.

In January, Andreas M. Antonopoulos received the Finney Freedom Prize for his work teaching the world about Bitcoin and self-custody.

The fourth Global Freedom Tech Summit comes to Bitcoin Park in Nashville on Oct. 6–9. From Dec. 2 to 5, HRF sponsors the fifth Africa Bitcoin Conference in Blantyre, Malawi, founded by the Togolese democracy activist Farida Nabourema.

60

dissidents, developers and funders at the Lofoten Retreat

3

days of the Freedom Go Up stage in Las Vegas



"Release Them": HRF's projection in Washington, D.C., during Xi Jinping's state visit, Sept. 23, 2026.

PHOTO: HRF

CCP DISRUPTION INITIATIVE

Xi came to Washington. So did they.

On Sept. 23, 2026, Xi Jinping landed for his first state visit in more than a decade. HRF made sure the capital saw the people his regime jails.

That evening, HRF projected the faces and names of eight Chinese political prisoners at six sites across Washington, including the National Gallery of Art's East Building. Trucks carried their portraits through the streets, and full-page ads in *Roll Call* put them in front of Congress. The message was two words: **Release Them.**

"My dad thought the projections were the most impressive thing this week," said Grace Jin Drexel, whose father, Pastor Ezra Jin (Jin Mingri), had walked free on July 4.

Pastor Jin's release came after one of the program's own campaigns. Before President Trump's May visit to Beijing,

HRF sent a video of Grace's appeal to more than 650 congressional staffers. Trump raised the case with Xi.

The work went on all year. In March, 30 young Uyghur, Tibetan, Hong Kong, Chinese and Southern Mongolian activists, along with activists from Taiwan, trained together in Ghent at the Beyond Borders workshop. In August, HRF turned that work into two policy briefs, one for the U.S. and one for the EU, plus an activist toolkit on transnational repression. More than 110 policymakers received them before Xi arrived.



Joshua Wong
Student leader ·
Hong Kong



Owen Chow
Hong Kong 47
democrat



Ilham Tohti
Uyghur economist and
professor



Dr. Gulshan Abbas
Uyghur doctor



Gao Zhen
Artist · 2026 Havel
Prize laureate



Pastor Wang Lin
Zion Church, Beijing



Pastor Gao Yingjia
Zion Church, Beijing



Pastor Gao Quanfu
Held since May 2025
for leading his
congregation

KOREA DESK

A thousand windows into North Korea

The Kim regime's power rests on a lie: that the outside world is worse. Every flash drive that crosses the border breaks it a little.

In May, HRF supplied its partner NK Times with 750 USB drives. Working through trusted networks in Northeast China, NK Times delivered 1,000 drives into North Korea. They reached Hyesan, Pyongyang, Nampo, Sariwon and Haeju, loaded with news, practical information, films, music and lifestyle programs. The June report from inside found strong demand for outside information, and found that mixed content is both safer to carry and more effective than purely political material.

The Korea Desk also carries defectors' voices outward. From June to August, NK Insider, the English-language news site written by North Korean defectors, published 20 articles on nuclear and military developments, surveillance, forced labor and the country's ties with China and Russia. It reached 8,886 readers in 133 countries, with 12,145 page views.

In May, Korea Desk director Seongmin Lee, himself a defector, appeared in VICE News's [Inside North Korea's Closed Digital World](#).

In October, the NK Insider Forum brings defectors, diplomats and civil society to Seoul to take on censorship inside North Korea.

1,000

flash drives of outside media
carried into North Korea

8,886

NK Insider readers



Seongmin Lee, director of HRF's Korea Desk.
PHOTO: HRF



04

Direct Support

In a closed society, one determined activist can move more than a UN agency. So HRF backs them directly: mentors, contacts, training and money.

-
- FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP
 - MICROGRANTS
 - OSLO SCHOLARS
 - RESILIENCE PROGRAM



Freedom Fellows at work during the program.

PHOTO: HRF

FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP

76 leaders. 37 countries. One network.

For one year, HRF gives frontline advocates, social entrepreneurs and nonprofit leaders the mentors, training and contacts to take their work further.

The 2025–26 class finished at the Oslo Freedom Forum in June. In their final months, the Fellows trained in public speaking through HRF’s partnership with Ignite Talks and were coached by Lilian Tintori on resilience and leadership. Each gave a capstone presentation in Oslo. Among the graduates was the Venezuelan democracy activist Ana Corina Sosa, who had accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo six months earlier on behalf of her mother, María Corina Machado.

The eighth class met for the first time at the same Forum. With it, the Fellowship network grows to 76 leaders across 37 countries,

including the first Fellows from El Salvador and Mozambique. Oslo made connections right away. Md Saiful Islam, a Fellow from Bangladesh, was invited to speak at an event hosted by the Global Migrant Workers Network. Fellows also helped test Gene, an AI strategy adviser for movements from CANVAS founder Srdja Popović, in a closed pilot session.

Alumni keep building. Sam Yan Press, the Thai publishing house founded by 2019 Fellow Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, grew out of the mentorship and grant support he received as a Fellow. It was shortlisted for the 2026 Prix Voltaire.

76

leaders in the Fellowship network

37

countries

8th

class, the first with Fellows from El Salvador and Mozambique



OSLO SCHOLARS

The largest class yet

Oslo Scholars sends university students to spend a summer working beside some of the world's leading dissidents. HRF received 289 applications and offered 55 places. In June, 52 Scholars began internships at 17 organizations. They investigated Kremlin corruption at the Anti-Corruption Foundation, tracked far-right extremism and monitored information flows into North Korea.

For the first time, HRF sponsored three Scholars to work in person beside their mentors in high-risk places. Scholars met those mentors at the Oslo Freedom Forum before the summer began.

52

Scholars, the largest class yet

17

host organizations

289

applications

MICROGRANTS

Small grants, sharp effects

HRF's microgrants go straight to activists and groups with a clear plan and real financial need, and HRF follows each one to see what it achieves.

In February, grants went to Students for a Free Tibet for the Tibetan Youth Tenshug, a youth-led festival of Tibetan identity; to Abdullah Ibhais for *Inside the Machine*, which trains journalists to expose sportswashing around the FIFA World Cup; and to the Vanguard Africa Foundation for *Tales of Resistance*, which tells the stories of Africa's pro-democracy movements.



A light moment at an HRF Resilience Retreat, Blue Spirit center, Nosara, Costa Rica.

PHOTO: HRF RESILIENCE PROGRAM

RESILIENCE PROGRAM

Strength for the long fight

Prison, exile, surveillance and loss take a toll that rarely makes headlines. The Resilience Program exists so defenders can keep going.

In 2026, backed by a multi-year commitment from the Reynolds Foundation, HRF turned its care for defenders into a standing program. On May 28, Jhanisse Vaca-Daza and Alexia Tovar introduced it on the main stage of the Trauma Research Foundation's International Trauma Conference in Boston, where HRF was a headline sponsor. Days later it launched at the Oslo Freedom Forum. There, the trauma expert Bessel van der Kolk joined a panel that read out questions activists had sent in: about survivor's guilt, trust and the urge to quit.

In August, 20 frontline defenders spent a week at the Blue Spirit center in Nosara, Costa Rica, at the program's first retreat: trauma-informed rest, reflection and peer support. The faculty were Annette Knopp, Dr. Vanina Waizmann, Gayle Karen Young and Lilian Tintori, with Dr. Aaron Aviera and Jamila Raqib. Alongside the retreat, Dr. Elissa Epel's team at UC San Francisco is building what HRF believes is the first systematic data set on the mental health of activists living under dictatorship.

Nominate

HRF's regional leads recommend defenders; our legal and policy team checks every nomination.

Restore

A week of rest, movement, contemplative practice and trauma-informed training.

Connect

Peer support among people who know the weight of prison, exile and loss.

20

frontline defenders at the first retreat

6

faculty members

1 week

of trauma-informed rest and peer support

"One of the hardest things for activists is to take time off."

BESSEL VAN DER KOLK • TRAUMA RESEARCHER, OSLO FREEDOM FORUM, OSLO, JUNE 2026



05

Public Education & Events

Dictators need silence. We fill rooms from Oslo to Berlin with the people they tried to silence, and with those ready to help.

- OSLO FREEDOM FORUM
- COLLEGE FREEDOM FORUM

- HAVEL PRIZE & NOBEL LAUREATE
- HRF ON THE ROAD



María Corina Machado on the Oslo Freedom Forum stage, June 2026.

PHOTO: OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

OSLO FREEDOM FORUM · JUNE 1-3, 2026

Dismantling Dictatorship

The 18th Oslo Freedom Forum drew a record crowd with one conviction: tyranny is built, so it can be taken apart.

111

countries represented, a record Forum

113

speakers

1 in 7

attendees from unfree countries

Nearly 1,600 people came to Oslo, 26% more than the year before. For one in seven of them, the trip was itself an act of defiance: people from closed countries risk their passports, their families' safety and sometimes their way home. HRF paid tickets, flights and hotels for 40 activists who could not otherwise have come, and sold 80 discounted tickets to students.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado took the stage in person for the first time and pressed for new elections in Venezuela. Telegram's Pavel Durov, Richard

Gere, Noor Pahlavi, Sergei Tihanovski, Salome Zourabichvili, Luaty Beirão, Carmen Lau, Steven Kefas, Lia Gazi and Yulia Navalnaya also spoke. Lobsang Sangay, former president of the Tibetan government-in-exile, reminded the hall that toppling a dictatorship is only the first task. Building democracy comes next.

The world tuned in: more than 1,000 media hits in 125+ countries and 27 languages, 7.7 million video views and 350,000 social media engagements.

What happened after the talks

“The stories, wisdom, and courage shared throughout the Forum will stay with me and will continue to nourish my heart and spirit of peace through action.”

TENZIN CHOEGYAL · TIBETAN MUSICIAN AND MAIN-STAGE PERFORMER, OSLO FREEDOM FORUM, OSLO, JUNE 2026

“The most powerful opportunity to protect freedom.”

FORUM PASS ATTENDEE · OSLO FREEDOM FORUM, OSLO, JUNE 2026

“A great opportunity to know many stories and realize that we are not alone.”

PATRON PASS ATTENDEE · OSLO FREEDOM FORUM, OSLO, JUNE 2026



Yulia Navalnaya, HRF Chair.

PHOTO: HRF

A portrait goes to Geneva

Rémy and Rist Amahirwa, sons of the jailed Rwandan opposition leader Victoire Ingabire, met María Corina Machado beside a portrait of their mother painted at HRF's booth. Rémy then took the portrait to the UN Human Rights Council. A month after the Forum, UN experts ruled Ingabire's detention arbitrary.

The UN takes notice

Yulia Navalnaya described from the stage how Alexei Navalny's lawyers, Vadim Kobzev and Alexei Liptser, were imprisoned. UN Working Group members in the audience sent HRF a follow-up request on the case right away.

Doors open in government

Machado met Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre. Noor Pahlavi and Richard Gere met the President of the Storting, Norway's parliament, to talk about Iran.

Tools launched on site

The World Liberty Congress launched Ágora, a fundraising platform for freedom movements that began at an AI Hack for Freedom and was then backed by HRF's Bitcoin Development Fund.

VÁCLAV HAVEL INTERNATIONAL
PRIZE FOR CREATIVE DISSENT

Art that **unmasks** the lie

Founded in 2012 with Dagmar Havlová, the Havel Prize honors dissidents who, in Havel's words, choose to live in truth.

CHINA

Gao Zhen

One half of the Gao Brothers, whose work mocks Mao and the Cultural Revolution. Gao was arrested at 70 over three sculptures made between 2006 and 2009, under a law that took effect only in 2018. On Aug. 25, 2026, he was sentenced to three years for “slandering heroes and martyrs.” HRF has asked the UN to declare his detention arbitrary.

From the OFF stage to the Nobel. On Dec. 10, 2025, the Nobel Peace Prize went to María Corina Machado for leading Venezuela's peaceful democratic movement despite disqualification, threats and persecution. Her

BURMA

Sai

A Burmese artist and curator, known by one name to protect his family, who has documented the junta's repression since the 2021 coup. In 2025, under pressure from the Chinese Communist Party, Thai officials censored his Bangkok exhibition on how dictators prop each other up. He fled to the United Kingdom, where he works in exile.

daughter, Ana Corina Sosa, accepted it in Oslo on her behalf. Six months later, Machado took the Oslo Freedom Forum stage in person for the first time and called for new elections.

COLLEGE FREEDOM FORUM

The next generation meets the front line

From New Jersey to Berlin, students met dissidents face to face and heard what it costs to stand up to a dictator.

On Feb. 20, HRF brought the College Freedom Forum to Seton Hall University with its School of Diplomacy and International Relations. Under the theme “Lessons from Tibet on Repression and Nonviolent Resistance,” the Tibetan activist Chemi Lhamo, a spokesperson for the World Liberty Congress, told students about exile, community-led resistance and the doxxing and threats she faced while running for student union president at the University of Toronto.

On Sept. 25, the forum held its first European edition, in Berlin, with Prometheus – Home of Freedom. The idea came out of conversations at the Oslo Freedom Forum. Five speakers took the stage: Tanele Maseko of Eswatini, Chloe Cheung of Hong Kong, Dr. Zohreh Abdollahkhani of Iran, the Nigerian journalist Steven Kefas and Pedro Urruchurtu of Venezuela. Nearly 100 students and young professionals came, weeks after polarizing state elections had left many young Germans worried about their own democracy. They tested the Tyranny Tracker and joined a creative-dissent activation. While in Berlin, the speakers briefed Germany’s Federal Foreign Office.

~100

students and young professionals
in Berlin

5

speakers at the first European CFF



Tanele Maseko, a speaker at College Freedom Forum Berlin.
PHOTO: HRF

Wherever the fight is, **we show up**

Jan. 17–18	AI Hack for Freedom I Bitcoin Park, Austin, Texas Eight defenders, eight tools, 28 hours
Feb. 26	Tyranny Tracker launch New York 179 countries and territories rated
March	Beyond Borders workshop Ghent, Belgium 30 young diaspora activists
May 9–10	AI Hack for Freedom II Nashville, Tennessee Eight dissidents build censorship-resistant tools
June 1–3	Oslo Freedom Forum Oslo, Norway Record crowd from 111 countries
July	Africa Liberty Forum Accra, Ghana Workshop on financial freedom under pressure
Sept. 23	Release Them Washington, D.C. Eight prisoners' faces projected as Xi arrives
Sept. 25	College Freedom Forum Berlin Berlin, Germany The first in Europe

Feb. 20	College Freedom Forum Seton Hall University, New Jersey Lessons from Tibet, with Chemi Lhamo
March 18	SXSW: “Encrypted Resistance” Austin, Texas Youth revolt in memes, art and metadata
April 27–29	Bitcoin 2026: Freedom Go Up stage Las Vegas Three days of HRF programming
May 28	International Trauma Conference Boston Resilience Program introduced on the main stage
June 4–6	Lofoten Retreat Lofoten, Norway 60 dissidents, builders and funders
August	Resilience Program retreat Blue Spirit, Nosara, Costa Rica 20 frontline defenders
Sept. 24–25	AI Hack for Freedom III Washington, D.C., with NED Ten captains, \$50,000 in prizes

UPCOMING This fall

Oct. 6–9	Global Freedom Tech Summit Bitcoin Park, Nashville The fourth edition
Nov. 3–5	AI for Individual Rights Summit San Francisco The AI and freedom communities, in one room
Dec. 3–4	AI Hack for Freedom IV Presidio Bitcoin, San Francisco The fourth hackathon
December	Art in Protest at Art Week Miami Miami A new installation with Cuban Freedom March

October	NK Insider Forum Seoul, South Korea Defectors, diplomats and civil society
Dec. 2–5	Africa Bitcoin Conference Blantyre, Malawi The fifth edition
December	George Ayittey Democracy Retreat Africa The fifth edition



06

Media Impact

In 2026, HRF's work broke through: dissidents' own words in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post* and the *Journal of Democracy*, and on NPR and the BBC.

■ OP-EDS & ESSAYS

■ TOP COVERAGE

■ SOCIAL MEDIA

Taking the fight to the **opinion** pages

HRF's staff and allies wrote for the world's leading papers, putting dissidents' arguments in front of the people who make policy.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Tell Delcy Rodríguez: You're Fired

Thor Halvorssen · Jan. 6, 2026

THE WASHINGTON POST

Dictators are coming for the lawyers

Yulia Navalnaya · Jan. 16, 2026

JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

Tracking Tyranny in an Age of Democratic Backsliding

Javier El-Hage, Malaak Jamal and Alvaro Piaggio · Feb. 1, 2026

THE WASHINGTON POST

Trump talks of 'taking Cuba.' Here's what must come first.

Roberto González · March 19, 2026

THE FREE PRESS

Thirty Years Late, Justice Comes Knocking on Raúl Castro's Door

Roberto González · May 23, 2026

REALCLEARPOLITICS

A Pastor in a Chinese Prison, a Daughter Holding Onto Hope

Grace Jin Drexel · May 24, 2026

OPENGLOBALRIGHTS

A right called democracy

Javier El-Hage, Sergei Korotkov, Mariana Atala and Ezequiel Podjarny · June 7, 2026

THE GUARDIAN

I was jailed for speaking out about the treatment of workers at the Qatar World Cup. I am still being punished

Abdullah Ibhaïs · June 8, 2026

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Russia Has Lost Its 'Near Abroad'

Casey Michel · June 12, 2026

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Decades Late, Cuba Approves Serious Market Reforms

Roberto González · July 7, 2026

THE HILL

My fiancée stood by Voice of America. America must stand by her.

Ramin Guluzada · July 17, 2026

THE KYIV INDEPENDENT

Thanks to Ukraine's new strategy, Russia's grip on Crimea is crumbling

Casey Michel · July 21, 2026

JOURNAL OF DEMOCRACY

How AI Agents Are Empowering Human- Rights Defenders

Alex Gladstein · July 22, 2026

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Bitcoin's Overlooked Promise: Freedom

Alex Gladstein · Sept. 5, 2026

The world **heard** them

When the Kremlin banned HRF, when dissidents built their own AI and when Machado took the Oslo stage, the world's newsrooms covered it.

Reuters **NPR** **BBC World Service** **VICE News**
The World **Forbes** **The Guardian**
The Wall Street Journal **The Washington Post**
Journal of Democracy

REUTERS

Russia bans Human Rights Foundation chaired by Yulia Navalnaya as 'undesirable'

Aug. 7, 2026

NPR · WEEKEND EDITION SUNDAY

From human rights to mathematical research: how AI is being used for good

Sept. 27, 2026

BBC WORLD SERVICE

How can AI advance human rights? (interview with Alex Gladstein)

July 26, 2026

VICE NEWS

Inside North Korea's Closed Digital World, featuring Seongmin Lee

May 26, 2026

THE WORLD (PRI)

María Corina Machado uses Oslo stage to press for new elections

June 2, 2026

FORBES

When The Financial System Can't Reach People In Crisis, Bitcoin Can

July 16, 2026

1,000+

Oslo Freedom Forum media hits in 125+ countries and 27 languages

7.7M

Oslo Freedom Forum video views

350K

social media engagements around the Forum

2026 figures to come shortly

The figures below are HRF's 2025 revenue and expenses, as published in our 2025 Annual Report, with the audited 2024 figures for comparison.

UNAUDITED

HRF \$29,921,443 · Oslo Freedom Forum Norway* \$180,800



Contributions & Grants	\$29,661,617	98%
Program Sales	\$259,827	1%
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$180.800	1%

Expenses exceeded revenue in FY2025 due to a planned strategic investment in program expansion and infrastructure. These investments were supported by prior-year reserves and are aligned with the organization's multi-year growth plan.

UNAUDITED

HRF \$38,435,594 · Oslo Freedom Forum Norway* \$144,000



Programs	\$35,230,672	91%
Development	\$903,073	2%
Administrative	\$2,301,848	6%
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$144,000	1%

*Revenue and expenses presented here were generated by Oslo Freedom Forum Norway for the Oslo Freedom Forum event, which was planned and executed by HRF. The 2025 HRF Revenue and Expense totals are unaudited and do not reflect any investment activity.

AUDITED BY PKF O'CONNOR DAVIES, LLP

Revenue	\$30,190,518	
Contributions & Grants	\$29,446,960	97%
Program Sales	\$513,596	2%
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$229,962	1%

Expenses	\$40,152,637	
Programs	\$36,110,586	90%
Development	\$1,622,106	4%
Administrative	\$2,181,190	5%
Oslo Freedom Forum Norway*	\$238,755	1%

GOVERNANCE

Board & International Council

Chair

1

Yulia Navalnaya

Board & International Council

13

Masih Alinejad

Mart Laar

Park Sang-hak

Kenneth Anderson

Alexander Lloyd

Mutabar Tadjibaeva

Diego Arria

Jacqueline
Moudeina

Cameron Colby
Thomson

Abdel Ould Ethmane

Marina Nemat

Álvaro Vargas-Llosa

Debbi Gibbs

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

Norwegian
Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

The Reynolds
Foundation

Fritt Ord

River

Atlas Network

Institute for
Humane
Studies

City of Oslo

John
Templeton
Foundation

Cake Wallet

OUR TEAM

HRF Staff

Leadership

Thor Halvorsen

Chief Executive Officer

Céline Assaf-Boustani

President

Javier El-Hage

Chief Legal and Policy Officer

Alex Gladstein

Chief Strategy Officer

Roberto González

Chief Advocacy Officer

Sandra Germaine

Chief Talent Officer

Andrew Kolb

Vice President of Marketing and Communications

Staff & fellows

Ali Al-Bayaa

Research Fellow

Gloria Ampofo

Travel Logistics Coordinator

Nick Anthony

CBDC Tracker Fellow

Samuele Arioli

Tyranny Tracker Intern

Mariana Atala

Legal & Policy Fellow

Holly Baxter

Executive Director, Art in Protest

Emilia Bebić

Program and Research Fellow

Claudia Bennett

Legal and Program Officer

Sophia Choi

Junior Designer

Kristen Clemens

Policy and Research Officer

Matthew Correa

Financial Freedom Digital Growth Intern

Alessandro De Nino

Comptroller

Tahlia Edgar-Chalker

Associate Producer/Editor

Per Elvestuen

Oslo Freedom Forum Director

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Research Fellow

Lucian French

Associate Design Lead

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Raven Germaine

Finance & Operations Associate

Cameron Gonzalez

Executive Assistant to the CEO

Paige Gorman

Development Research Assistant

Zac Guignard

Financial Freedom Content Consultant

Michelle Gulino

Director of Legal and Programs

Jørn Haanæs

Strategic Advisor, Oslo Freedom Forum

Camilla Heiervang

Senior Communications Advisor

Kaitie Holland

International Legal Associate

Jason Hsu

AI and Individual Rights Fellow

Eric Hurtgen

Creative Consultant

Judy Imasuen

Bitcoin Development Operations Consultant

Malaak Jamal

Director of Policy and Research

Sherry Jeng

Senior Development Officer

Mo Keita

Senior Policy Officer, Africa

Corinne Kenny

Press Officer

Christian Keroles

Director, Financial Freedom

Moury Khan

Digital Marketing Lead

Sergei Korotkov

Legal Fellow

Seongmin Lee

Director of Korea Desk

Alex Li

Bitcoin Development Lead

Femi Longe

Global Freedom Technology Development Lead

Nolwenn Mahé

Legal & Policy Consultant, Africa

Tony Malak

Digital Director

Wiriranai Masara

Research Fellow

Adela Masic

Financial Freedom Event Operations Consultant

Kristen McGuire

Volunteer

Kate Meshcheriakova

Office Administrator

Casey Michel

Director, Combating Kleptocracy Program

Arsh Molu

Financial Freedom Operations Lead

Justin Moon

AI for Individual Rights Technical Advisor

Sarah Moorman

Freedom Tech Content Associate

Karl Obeid

Digital Content Consultant

Scott Olsen-Morales

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Ayelen Osorio

Financial Freedom Specialist

Elle Ota

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Research Fellow

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Alvaro Piaggio

Senior Policy Officer, Americas

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Legal & Policy Fellow

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Guillermo Purchase

Marketing and Communications Assistant

Zara Rancheva

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Clark Ruper

Senior Advisor, Development

Nayla Saab

Creative Consultant

Jihane Saadeh

WordPress Developer

Tigran Sargsyan

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Elizabeth Shelbred

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Grace Spalding-Fecher

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Victoria Specht

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Venla Stang

Senior Legal Associate

Charles Sutherland

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Web Designer

Alexia Tovar

Programs Associate

Caitlin Triplett

International Legal Associate

Nadeige Uwamba

Major Gifts Officer

Jhanisse Vaca-Daza

Senior Program Officer, Freedom Fellowship Director

Hannah Van Dijke

Legal and Research Officer

Vanina Waizmann

Mental Health Mentor

Nasser Wedaddy

Senior Policy Advisor

Li-Chien Wei

Legal & Policy Intern

Win Ko Ko Aung

Nonprofit Bitcoin Adoption Fellow

Ying Zhang

Creative Director

Karim Zidan

Sports and Dictators Fellow

Those we



PHOTO: HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

Dan Grossman

1944 – 2025

“Dan was a true treasure, a dear friend, and mentor we could always rely on for guidance in governance, professional growth, and staying true to our principles as advocates for human freedom. He brought a wicked sense of humor, boundless warmth, and a quiet intensity that inspired us all, paired with an infectious joy for life.”

THOR HALVORSSON • HRF CEO • JAN. 1, 2026

A visionary entrepreneur and steadfast leader, Dan dedicated his life to advancing human freedom worldwide. Three decades ago he retired from business to improve the management and governance of the nonprofit organizations he admired, and over the years that followed he mentored nonprofit executives and human rights advocates alike.

Across his lifetime he gave more than 100 combined board-years to organizations advancing freedom,

among them the Atlas Network (which he served for 20 years, eight as Chairman), the Charter Cities Institute, the Foundation for Economic Education, Students for Liberty, and Young Voices. As a member of HRF’s Board of Directors, he profoundly shaped our organization and its mission with his wisdom and commitment. He passed away peacefully in Vancouver, Canada, at the end of 2025.

HRF will honor Dan’s legacy by remembering him, and by continuing — joyfully and relentlessly — the work he believed in so deeply: promoting and protecting human rights wherever freedom is most imperiled.

carry forward

Amir Ahmad Nasr

1986–2026

“Amir was part of the HRF community for more than 15 years. Throughout that time, he was a friend, a mentor, a confidant, and a reliable voice of truth to many of us. We will miss Amir not only for his incredible work as a human rights defender and advocate for freedom, but for his kindness, his brilliance, and his humor.”

CÉLINE ASSAF-BOUSTANI • HRF PRESIDENT • SEPT. 27, 2026



PHOTO: OSLO FREEDOM FORUM

A Sudanese-Canadian author, artist, journalist, and human rights advocate, Amir dedicated his life to supporting the Sudanese struggle for freedom through his once-anonymous blog, “The Sudanese Thinker,” and as a prominent voice of nonviolent resistance movements in his native Sudan.

He first spoke at the Oslo Freedom Forum in 2011, where he shared lessons from Sudan’s history of revolutions with a global audience of activists, journalists, philanthropists, and thought leaders. In 2013 he published *My Isl@m: How Fundamentalism Stole My Mind – And Doubt Freed My Soul*, documenting his personal journey facing fundamentalism and calling for liberty and freedom of thought.

As we mourn this profound loss, HRF will carry on Amir’s legacy and draw from his example — to continue to speak the truth, to form deep connections with those around us, and to never give up in our efforts for freedom.

WE ALSO REMEMBER

Václav Havel
Chairman Emeritus, 1936–2011

Ramón José Velásquez
1916–2014

Dr. George Ayittey
1945–2022

Elie Wiesel
1928–2016

Palden Gyatso
1933–2018

James Q. Wilson
1931–2012

Eduardo Mendoza
1917–2009

Harry Wu
1937–2016

Stand with the people who **stand up**

Every prisoner freed, every tool built and every voice carried this year started with someone who chose to help. Be that person in 2027.

01 Give

HRF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and your gift is tax-deductible to the fullest extent of U.S. law. Give online, in bitcoin, by mail, in stock, or through a memorial or legacy gift.

[GIVING.HRF.ORG/PAGE/DONATE](https://giving.hrf.org/page/donate)

02 Work with us

Begin or grow your career in human rights. See open roles at hrf.org.

[HRF.ORG](https://hrf.org)

03 Intern

Students and recent graduates: take a paid internship, in office or remote, with flexible hours. Write to interns@hrf.org.

INTERNS@HRF.ORG

04 Volunteer

Have a skill the freedom movement needs? Email info@hrf.org with “Volunteer Opportunities” in the subject line.

INFO@HRF.ORG

05 Follow

Follow the front lines as they happen: [@HRF](https://twitter.com/HRF) and [@OsloFF](https://twitter.com/OsloFF).

[X.COM/HRF](https://x.com/HRF)

Human Rights Foundation · hrf.org · contact@hrf.org · +1 (212) 246-8486 · [@HRF](https://twitter.com/HRF) · [@OsloFF](https://twitter.com/OsloFF)

**Every cell can
be opened.**